

# With increased membership, Bluejacket Singers prepare for Spring 2022 season

Last September the *Bluejacket Singers* - Nicholas County Elementary School's after school choir - started to rehearse for the first time in preparation for the school's veterans day program. Membership sat around 20 fifth and sixth grade students but due to quarantines and other conflicts, the group regularly performed with around 16 or less.

"I truly didn't know how this choir would be received by the students or community when I started to rehearse with them." said NCEs Music Teacher Ross Haney. "But I think it's clear that all Nicholas Countians who have heard the *Singers* feel this is a great program for our kids."

Following two successful holiday concerts in December, membership was opened up to fourth grade students and the interest in music at NCEs was evident, as the choir's membership now sits at approximately 45 students. Mr. Haney decided a group of this size deserved to be showcased near and far and has many plans for the coming concert season.

On March 24th the choir will travel to Morehead State University to participate in the Kentucky Music Educators Association's District 8 Choral Assessment. This will be the first



time a choir from Nicholas County Elementary School will perform at this event, and they will be assessed by a qualified panel of adjudicators that will provide the group a rating and comments to improve. The group takes the stage at 10:00am in MSU's Baird Music Hall, and the event is free to the public.

The *Singers* will return to the Neal Welcome Center's Mozart Hall on Friday, May 6th at 6:00pm to perform their spring concert *When We Sing*. The performance will include selections from the choir's Choral Assessment repertoire and a special piece arranged by Director Ross Haney and local music teacher Jerry Johnson, who serves as the group's collaborative pianist.

Following their community performance the group plans to travel to an amusement park and

perform as part of the Trills and Thrills Music Festival to receive additional comments and another rating. The event will end with students enjoying an afternoon of rides, food, and fun.

"I'm really looking forward to a few more great performances with our students." Mr. Haney said. "Music has been so important to our school community this year, and I can't wait to see how it continues to make an impact on the students at NCEs."

*As the concert season approaches, the Bluejacket Singers like many groups must fundraise to cover costs for sheet music, travel, and equipment used at concerts. If you would like to help their program thrive, you can visit [bit.ly/bluejack-etraise](https://bit.ly/bluejack-etraise) to donate to their new Snap! Raise fundraiser and help them reach their goal!*

# NCES Bluejacket Singers rate Distinguished



This past Thursday, March 24th, the Nicholas County Elementary School Bluejacket Singers Choir traveled to Morehead State University to participate in the Kentucky Music Educators Association's District 8 Choral Assessment. Assessed by a panel of three highly qualified and credentialed choral directors, the group earned a Distinguished rating - the event's highest honor.

The Bluejacket Singers - comprised of a select group of NCES 4th, 5th, and 6th graders - arrived at Morehead State's Baird Music Hall on Thursday morning ready to make school history. These students were the only elementary school choir in attendance, and the first choir of this age to attend the event from Nicholas County Schools. Immediately after arrival at the university, students donned their signature white polo shirts and headed into the building to warm up their voices

and prepare to take the stage for judging.

The almost 40 students then marched down to nearby Duncan Recital Hall to begin their assessment, and 4th grade student Lizbeth Ojeda introduced the group and their selections. The Singers performed an original arrangement of the spiritual This Little Light of Mine by Director Ross Haney and Collaborative Pianist Jerry Johnson and Leann Starkey's When I Sing.

All three judges were extremely complementary of the group, making note of their singing tone, intonation, diction, musicianship, and blend/balance. One area of agreement among the judges was the distinguished nature of the group's presentation on stage and how they carried themselves throughout the performance.

A celebration was held for the group at nearby Mr. Gatti's for an afternoon of pizza and games. One may assume this would be the most mem-

orable part of the day in many of the students' minds, but when asked later about their favorite memory made, many members of choir mentioned how good it felt to earn a distinguished rating, sing together as one with their fellow choir members, and make some new friends along the way.

Although this is a momentous achievement for the group, their spring concert season does not stop here. If you would like to hear these students in action, consider attending their When We Sing concert on Friday, May 6th at the Neal Welcome Center's Mozart Hall at 7:00pm.

Following their local concert, the group will travel to Wilmington, OH to participate in the Trills and Thrills Music Festival and receive an additional rating. They will then travel to the Kings Island amusement park to enjoy a day of fun, food, and friendship.

# NCES Music students dance in showcase event



Left to Right: Anslee Terrell, Hadley Duncan, Georgia Hampton, Amanda Guerrero, Cheyanne Brierley, Madeline Reed, Jocelyn Rhodes, Xander Guy, Cole Smoot, Gabe Sadler, JD Tincher, Music Teacher Ross Haney

On Saturday, May 14, eleven students from the third grade class of Nicholas County Elementary School participated in the first annual Kentucky Music Educators Association District 8 Elementary Music Showcase hosted at Camargo Elementary School in Mt. Sterling.

The event featured students from Nicholas County Schools, Montgomery County Schools, and Ashland Independent Schools. Our own NCES third grade participants showed audience members three of the many folk dances they have learned this year as part of their regular music class. This included a Mexican folk dance called Los Machetes, Sasha!, a Russian mixer dance, and a dance written by Will Dubstien of Bow Tie Music to the contemporary folk song The Fox.

The students who participated were selected based on their behavior in school this year and their participation in folk dances during music class. NCES Music Teacher Ross Haney plans to make this an annual trip for NCES third graders, giving them the opportunity to showcase the talent of the NCES Music



program to the greater music education community.

# Bluejacket Singers rate “superior” at Trills and Thrills Music Festival

This year, the newly established Bluejacket Singers - NCES's extra-curricular choir featuring fourth, fifth, and sixth graders - have not been strangers to taking on new challenges and making school history. This past Saturday, May 21, the group traveled across state lines to participate in the Trills and Thrills Music Festival at Wilmington High School in Wilmington, OH. Performing two familiar selections - Haney and Johnson's arrangement of This Little Light of Mine and Leeaan Starkey's When I Sing - the group received a “superior” rating from a panel of judges. This was the event's highest honor.



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You can hear the Bluejacket Singers this summer as they kick off the 76th annual Blackberry Festival on Tuesday, July 5th with a concert of their songs from this year, some patriotic se-

lections, and a performance by Director Ross Haney. The group would like to thank the community for all of their support this year, and looks forward to even more successes and growth in the next school year.